

Gilman's Drug Store (Mathew Brady Studio)  
627 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington  
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-129

HABS  
DC,  
WASH,  
327-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOW'S ...

HABS  
DC,  
WASH.  
327-

ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

STATE District of Columbia	COUNTY	TOWN OR VICINITY Washington
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) Gilman's Drug Store		HABS NO. DC-129
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE Mathew Brady Studio		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) 627 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) 1850's	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE)	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) Civil War photographer Mathew Brady had his studio on the top three floors from 1858-1881. Gilman's Drug Store (established 1822) occupied first floor until 1967. Before destruction, the interiors were some of the most elaborate 19th century commercial interiors in the city.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE)		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) Brick		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) 4-bay front; 4-stories; western half of double building		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE Arched windows with flanking colonnettes; patterned brick decoration; shop front on first floor		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED) Elaborate first-floor interior with decorative plaster ceiling and wooden shelving		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES Original interiors destroyed 1967.		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) Schwartz, Nancy B. <u>Historic American Buildings Survey District of Columbia Catalog</u> , 1974. Goode, James. <u>Capital Losses</u> . 1979.		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION Alison K. Hoagland, HABS (edited by Druscilla J. Null, HABS)		DATE 7/21/83

Addendum to  
Z.D. Gilman's Drugstore (Mark Weiss  
Camera Center)  
627 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Addendum to  
Z.D. GILMAN'S DRUGSTORE (Mark Weiss Camera Center)

HABS  
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Location: 627 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Lot 8D3, Square 460  
(originally the middle 21.6' of Lot 5).

Present Owner: Mark Weiss & Lotte Weiss, 111D7 Inwood Avenue,  
Silver Spring, Maryland

Present Occupant: Mark Weiss Camera Center

Present Use: Camera and film store

Significance: This small Italianate commercial building is a fine  
example of pre-Civil War commercial Washington  
architecture. From 1843 through 1965, this site  
bore the name of Gilman's Drugstore, thus making it  
the oldest drug store in continuous operation in the  
United States at the time of its closing.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: It is not possible to pinpoint the exact date of construction for this building. The Corporation of Washington Tax Books indicate a building date of 1855, showing an increase in value of improvements from \$3,800 in 1854 to \$8,500 in 1855. Prior to 1854 the value of improvements remains relatively constant as far back as the mid-1930's, when the Tax Books are too unclear to interpret accurately. The City of Washington Business Directories lists druggists on this lot from as early as 1822; however, they would have occupied an earlier structure than the one which exists today.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners:
  - 1839 Deed, December 23, 1829, recorded in Liber WB 73, Folio 264,  
William Kibby to Seth J. Todd.
  - 1843 Deed, September 25, 1843, recorded in Liber WB 104, Folio 61,  
George Sweeny, William Todd and Thomas Gillis (trustees of the estate of Seth J. Todd) to Zadoch D. Gilman.
  - 1881 Release, June 25, 1881, recorded in Liber 978, Folio 111,  
Andrew C. Bradley, trustee of the estate of Zadoch D. Gilman, to Emma H. Gilman, his wife, Ida M. Gilman Hall, and Julia Gilman Tiffany.

- 1904 Deed, May 3, 1904, recorded in Liber 2803, Folio 80,  
Julia Gilman Tiffany to Ida M. Gilman Hall.
- 1917 Deed, February 14, 1917, recorded in Liber 3957,  
Folio 266,  
Gilman P. Tiffany and Humphrey C. Tiffany, et al. to  
Isham Henderson.
- 1919 Deed, April 23, 1919, recorded in Liber 4185, Folio 117,  
Isham Henderson to Eugene G. Foster.
- 1919 Deed, April 23, 1919, recorded in Liber 4185, Folio 119,  
Eugene G. Foster, et ux., to Charles Franzoni.

The chain of title between 1919 and 1957 could not be  
traced.

- 1957 Deed, September 3, 1957, recorded in Liber 19012,  
Folio 292,  
Margaret T. Farr Franzoni to Wilson M. Farr, Trustee.
- 1961 Deed, August 1, 1961, recorded to Liber 11642,  
Folio 86,  
Rezin A. Farr to Wilson M. Farr.
- 1961 Deed, August 1, 1961, recorded in Liber 11642, Folio 89,  
Laura S. Farr to Edith Farr Elliott and Ann Farr Rothrock.
- 1961 Quit Claim Deed, August 1, 1961, recorded in Liber 11642,  
Folio 92,  
Fred Royce Franzoni, Jr., et ux. to John C. Franzoni,  
et. al.
- 1967 Deed, October 3, 1967, recorded in Liber 12804, Folio 28,  
John C. Franzoni, et. al., 9/18 st. int. plus 1/4 of a  
27/18 sts. int. to Mark Weiss, et ux., tenants by  
entirety.
- 1967 Deed, October 3, 1967, recorded in Liber 12804,  
Folio 31,  
Edith Malone Farr Elliott, et. al., 9/18 st. int. to  
Mark Weiss, et ux., tenants by entirety.
4. Original Plan and Construction: The original plan of the  
building consisted of a stairhall along the western wall and  
rooms occupying the remainder of the floor. With the excep-  
tion of the stair connecting the three upper floors, no  
evidence remains to indicate any more of the original plan.  
Photographs exist which illustrate the elaborate nineteenth  
century interior of Gilman's Drug Store (see below).

5. Alterations and Additions: A stereopticon view of the building taken in 1870 shows the exterior of the building to have undergone few major alterations with the exception of the following:

The storefront was removed and replaced with the existing one on June 24, 1926. The design of the modern storefront was completed by the contractor, J. J. Plankenhorn. (Permit #11302, cost \$1,200.) Other work done on the building was the periodic erection of a reviewing stand for the parades that occurred regularly on Pennsylvania Avenue. The cornice on the south facade was removed in the 1960's. The interior of the building was extensively remodeled in 1967 (Permit #B163823) at an estimated cost of \$2,000. Work done at this time included removing all non-bearing partitions, constructing new framing where necessary, fire-proofing the walls, installing a new floor and ceiling on the 1st and 2nd floors, pouring a concrete basement floor, repairing the roof, and other minor repairs where necessary.

- B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure: Prior to the end of the Civil War the address of the building was 350 Pennsylvania Avenue. The first pharmacy was opened at this address in 1822 by Seth J. Todd; Seth J. Todd Druggist is listed in the directories of 1827 and 1834. Zadock Douglas Gilman, an Englishman, began operating the drug store a few years after its opening. On September 25, 1843, he bought the property from William Todd and Thomas Gillis, the trustees of its original owner, Seth J. Todd. The name Z. D. Gilman remained on the building for over 130 years. In 1917, the building passed out of the family's hands. It was bought by Charles Franzoni in 1919. The Franzoni's had been involved in the firm since about 1860, when Joseph D. Franzoni began as a clerk in the store. Joseph later managed the business for the Gilman heirs. His eldest son, Charles Franzoni, had gone to work for the store in the 1880's. Charles bought the business after his father's death and remained with it until his own death in 1934. F. Royce Franzoni, a nephew, and later his son, John C. Franzoni, were major stockholders in the building and business until 1967. Among the clients of Gilman's drugstore were Daniel Webster, John Calhoun, Abraham Lincoln, and Robert E. Lee.

Professionals have rented the upper floors of the building throughout its history. Mathew B. Brady, the renowned Civil War photographer who, from 1858-1881, operated a gallery one door to the east, expanded into the upper floors of Gilman's Drugstore in the 1860's. Some of his original glass plates were discovered on the 4th floor of the building during the 1967 remodeling. A series of dentists and physicians rented the upper floors of the building until 1928. During the 1920's, a portion of the upper floors was used as a residence by two women. From 1933 to 1956 Lee Hechinger leased the upper floors to rent out as furnished rooms to the public.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: This building is one of two adjoining pre-Civil War structures which have a common facade of Renaissance Revival: North Italian Mode. The resulting facade composition has considerable vitality and intricacy of detailing. Its scale and massing relate to its neighbors making it a strong element in the older Washington commercial district.
2. Condition of the Fabric: The exterior of the building is in fair condition. The stucco is separating from the brick on the south facade of the building and the cast iron is severely corroded, but the building is structurally stable. The interior has been gutted and completely remodeled; none of the original detail or material remains except for the stair.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all Dimensions: The site is 1,285 square feet in area. The Pennsylvania Avenue frontage is 21'-6". The site boundary on the east runs perpendicularly north from Pennsylvania Avenue for 32.56', then perpendicular to C Street for 36.39'. The C Street frontage is 17'. The west wall is perpendicular to C Street for 21.85', turning to meet Pennsylvania Avenue at a right angle at a distance of 42.85'. The structure is four stories high plus a basement. The first and second stories are slightly higher than the upper stories.
2. Foundations: Brick..
3. Walls:
  - a. South Facade: The south facade is constructed of brick laid in running bond that has been covered with stucco. The composition is a three bay arrangement recessed between slightly projecting piers. A belt course, supported by pendant shaped consoles at each end, separates the third from the fourth story. A decorative, recessed cast iron panel with five raised discs is directly beneath the sills of each of the third story windows. A crenelated detail is above each window. It is polygonal on the fourth and second stories and curved on the third story. The ground floor has two entries into the building.
  - b. West Facade: The west wall is a brick bearing wall of running bond. It was formerly a party wall.

- c. North Facade: The north facade has a two bay arrangement and is constructed of brick laid in running bond. A belt course is directly beneath the second story windows. The ground floor has two full-height arches. The east arch has been bricked in while the west arch contains an inset double door. Horizontal wooden panels form the remainder of the plane of the recessed area of the arch. Three piers, which have granite bases and rectangular sandstone caps, alternate with the arches. A metal fire escape scissors east to west down the facade of the building.
4. Structural Systems, Framing: Wooden joists span east to west between the load bearing brick party walls. The joists are supported by four interior piers along the east and west walls. Two structural steel beams run north to south in the southern portion of the basement. One spans below joists that were cut to provide for the stair to the basement, the other is centered in the front half of the building.
5. Balconies: A balcony exists on top of the projecting storefront of the Pennsylvania Avenue facade. It is surrounded by a delicate iron railing.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The south facade has a wooden door to the west of the projecting storefront. It provides access to the upper stories of the building. The primary storefront door is inset between the large aluminum framed display windows. It is a glass door with a wooden frame. The north facade has sheet metal sheathed double doors in the east arch of the ground floor. It is topped by a rectangular transom which is protected by a wrought iron grill. The third story has a wooden door with a nine-light window in its eastern bay. A segmentally arched three-light transom is above the door.
  - b. Windows: Double, segmentally arched windows, separated by cast iron colonettes the height of the spring line, are centered on the south facade. Single, segmentally arched windows, flanking the center pair, form the two narrow outer bays. All windows have wooden trim and double hung sash. The sash is four-over-four lights on the third and fourth stories and four-over-six lights on the second story.

The north facade has two pairs of segmentally arched windows over single sills on the fourth floor. They have four-over-four-light sash. The second and third story openings are united in appearance. The third story window is a segmentally arched, double-hung window with six-over-four light sash. The second



story has two double-hung rectangular windows with six-over-six light sash. The second and third story windows are united by a plain spandrel panel. Above the doorway in the western arch of the ground floor are a pair of segmentally arched four-over-four light double windows.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: A flat "tin" roof was original to the building. The roof is currently covered with asphalt. A wire glass skylight over the stairwell provides access to the roof from the building.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The top cornice of the south facade has been removed and replaced with sheet metal. The original cornice is pictured in both photographs referenced in Section III. The north facade has a massive denticulated cornice with a large, scroll from bracket at each end.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor Plans: All floor layouts were altered during the 1967 remodeling. The firestair is enclosed by firewalls on all upper floors with access doors to the landing in the north and south partitions.
  - a. Basement Floor Plan: A stair is adjacent to the west wall in the front third of the building and runs up towards the north. Two brick walls form a vault under the sidewalk in the northeast corner of the basement. The vault is reached by a door on the west end of the south wall. It has a concrete basin poured into the floor. The adjacent space to the west was probably used for coal storage.
  - b. Ground and Second Floor Plans: The ground and second floors have been substantially remodeled and little can be ascertained about their original layout. The ground floor is now one open space with two enclosed stairwells along the west wall. The second floor has two equal size rooms, one to the north and one to the south, which are accessible from the stair landing.
  - c. Third Floor Plan: The third floor has two rooms. The rear room is 11' deep and is raised 2-1/2' above the front room. There are four steps along the east wall up to this room and a door in the east corner of its southern partition.

- d. Fourth Floor Plan: The fourth floor is open except for the fire enclosure around the stairwell. The wood floor contains evidence of a former partition projecting 15' from the south wall of the room. Four piers line the east and west walls. Chimney flues are enclosed within the northern two piers of the east wall and northern most pier of the west wall.
2. Stairways: A straight stair runs along the west wall of the building from an entry on the Pennsylvania Avenue facade to the 2nd floor. From the 2nd to the 4th floor the stair is open to a skylight above. On the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors, a landing is adjacent to the west wall with the stairs rising parallel to it. The stair consists of four winders at the top and bottom with a straight run in between. The treads and risers are wood. There are massive wooden turned balusters and newels supporting a simple wooden handrail.
3. Flooring: The basement floor is concrete. Documentary evidence states that the ground floor was originally tile, identical to that layed in the original U. S. Capitol building. It is now linoleum applied directly on top of plywood sub flooring. New narrow wooden boards have been layed on the 2nd and 3rd floors. Older, wide board wooden flooring has been left in the north room on the 3rd floor and north end of the 4th floor. The 4th floor has been patched in the N.W. corner and in a 5' x 6' section in the center of the floor where there was once an elevator.
4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: All original wall and ceiling finishes were replaced with gypsum board in the 1967 interior remodeling of the building.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and Doors: Hollow core wooden doors provide access in the north and south perimeters of the stairwell enclosure. No original doors or trim remain.
  - b. Windows: The original trim has been removed around all glazing. A wire glass, gabled roof skylight is centered over the stairwell. It has a sheet metal hatch which provides access to the roof.
6. Decorative features and trim: All built-in cabinetry and trim were removed in the 1967 remodeling of the building. A photograph of the street level interior cabinetry appeared in Modern Pharmacy magazine from September 1952. It shows wooden shelving recessed behind half-round, double arches. Piers, separated by double arches, were carved with an elaborate cable molding. The same cableing surrounded each arch. Bay divisions were defined by semi-hexagonal pilasters with raised egg-like carvings on their surface. A large scroll was centered

above the double arch with an intricate leaf form carving at the corners of the architrave. A continuous frieze of stylized leaf forms was in the cornice above the shelving. Pier clusters sprang from the cornice at the line of the bay divisions forming a segmentally arched barrel vault across the width of the room. Two pieces from the original cabinet-work are being stored in the basement of the building.

7. Mechanical Equipment:

- a. Heating: The building was originally heated by stoves on each floor. Two flues are now enclosed on the east wall of the building and one on the west wall.
- b. Elevator: An elevator was located in the center rear of the building. It has been removed and no original equipment remains.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: Gilman's Drugstore was one of the numerous four to five story structures which were envisioned by Pierre L'Enfant to line Pennsylvania Avenue. They were to form unobtrusive low walls which would focus one's attention on the monuments which terminated its vistas at either end, the President's and Congress houses. By the mid 1800's, the block of Pennsylvania Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets was one of the major commercial and tourist zones of the developing city. At the time of the Civil War, the block contained three major hotels: the St. Marc, the Metropolitan, and the National. The entire block had a uniform scale and rhythm which has now been largely destroyed. The block is now stabilized by a major late 19th Century commercial structure at either end. Except for Gilman's Drugstore and its neighboring twin, the Mathew Brady Studio, the buildings in the mid-block are insignificant small commercial structures. Gilman's Drugstore and Mathew Brady's Studio, along with the corner buildings, present an ornate late 19th Century Washington commercial streetscape.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### 1. Old Views:

The north side of Pennsylvania Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets, N.W. from a stereopticon view of the City of Washington in 1870. The original belongs to Robert A. Truax, 3629 Legation Street, N.W., Washington, D. C., 20015.

The north side of Pennsylvania Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets, N.W. in the early 1920's. From the Library of Congress, #LC 122099.

#### 2. Bibliography:

##### a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Boyd, City of Washington Business Directory, 1822-1967.

Washington, D. C., National Archives, The Corporation of Washington Tax Books, 1829-1873.

Washington, D. C., National Archives, District of Columbia Building Permits, 1877-1965.

Washington, D. C., Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Deeds Books, 1839-1980.

##### b. Secondary and published sources:

Cobb, Josephine, "Mathew B. Brady's Photographic Gallery in Washington". Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Volume 53-56, p. 28-69.

Historical and Commercial Sketches of Washington and Environs, Our Capital, "The Paris of America". Washington, D. C.: E. E. Barton Publishers, 1884.

Horan, James D., Mathew Brady: Historian with a Camera. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1955.

"The Path to Health for 130 Years". Modern Pharmacy, September 1952, p. 20-22.

#### 3. Miscellaneous Sources:

Hopkin's Atlas of Washington, 1887.

Hopkin's Real Estate Plot Map, 1892.

Sanborn Insurance Maps, Volume 2, 1904.